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## CORRELATION BETWEEN FAMILY INTERACTION AND ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES

### ABSTRACT

*The impact of the family on the individual is very powerful and life-long. The family differs from other factors because the individual spends the most time in the family environment. In his family the child makes his first steps, utters the first words, starts gaining knowledge, learns his first value, forms attitudes and forms the foundation for the later development as a complete personality. Parents are the first and most responsible educators of their child, and upbringing is the most important and probably the hardest task of every parent. The period of adolescence is very important in every person's life, especially because of the process of separation and individuation. This is a transitional period from childhood to maturity with the greatest dynamics in the development of the individual. In this period adolescents change and mature. They are able to make independent decisions. Relationships with their parents play an important role in shaping their behavior.*

*The paper observes the family through family interaction, which consists of the following dimensions: satisfaction with their own families, acceptance and rejection by the mother and father. The aim of this study was to examine whether dimensions of parental behavior and satisfaction with their own families, perceived by adolescents, are associated with adolescents' attitudes to some aspects of family life. The study was conducted on 862 students of the final year of high school, of whom 385 were male and 477 female. The results showed a statistically significant correlation between the assessed family interaction dimensions and adolescents' attitudes to family life, with the exception of the attitude to work.*

*The results obtained can be used in organizing programs focusing on preparation of young people for parental and marital roles and strengthening the skills required later in their family lives for constructive solving of the problems they will encounter.*

**Keywords:** family, adolescence, parent-child relationship, adolescents' attitudes, informal learning.

### KORELACIJA MED DRUŽINSKO INTERAKCIJO IN STALIŠČI MLADOLETNIKOV – POVZETEK

*Vpliv družine na posameznika je zelo močan in traja vse življenje. Družina se loči od drugih dejavnikov, ker posameznik v družinskem okolju preživi največ časa. V okviru družine otrok napravi prve korake, izreče prve besede, pridobi prvo znanje in prve vrednote, oblikuje temelje za nadaljnji razvoj v popolno osebnost. Starši so otrokovi prvi in najodgovornejši vzgojitelji, vzgoja pa je najpomembnejša in verjetno najzahtevnejša naloga vsakega starša. Mladostniško obdobje je v življenju posameznika velikega pomena zaradi procesa osamosvajanja in individuacije. Je prehodno obdobje, ki vodi iz otroštva v zrelost, in je tudi najbolj dinamično v posameznikovem razvoju. V tem obdobju se mladostniki spreminjajo in zorijo ter postanejo sposobni sprejemati lastne odločitve. Odnosi s starši močno vplivajo na njihovo vedenje.*

*Naš prispevek analizira družino skozi družinsko interakcijo, ki ima naslednje razsežnosti: zadovoljstvo z družino, sprejetost ali zavračanje s strani matere in očeta. Namen raziskave je bil ugotoviti, ali starševsko ravnanje in zadovoljstvo z družino, kot ju doživlja mladostnik, vplivata na njegova stališča do raznih vidikov družinskega življenja. Raziskava je zajela 862 dijakov zadnjih letnikov srednje šole, od katerih jih je bilo 385 moškega spola in 477 ženskega. Izsledki so pokazali statistično pomembno korelacijo med ovrednotenimi dimenzijami družinskih odnosov in stališči mladostnikov do družinskega življenja, z izjemo odnosa do dela.*

*Pridobljena spoznanja je mogoče uporabiti v programih, ki naj skrbijo predvsem za pripravo mladih na starševske in zakonske vloge in razvijajo veščine, ki jih bodo mladostniki potrebovali pozneje v družinskem življenju za konstruktivno reševanje problemov, s katerimi se bodo srečevali.*

**Gljučne besede:** družina, mladostništvo, odnosi med starši in otroki, stališča mladostnikov, neformalno učenje.

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### INTRODUCTION

Family life is an important condition forming the basis for the further development of the child. Therefore, we considered it important and useful to explore the changes that involve

not only the function of the family, but also its structure and the nature of interpersonal relations between family members. Today, many families are changing and falling apart; they

do not have a linear development – the family life beginning with marriage, continuing with birth of children, children growing up and leaving home. However, the family is still the first circle in which the child lives, in which he gains his first experiences, develops his potential and his values; it is the environment in which he learns and builds relationships with other family members. Emotional ties are powerful, but not necessarily positive. The role individual family members play defines the quality of their behavior, which is largely determined by social and cultural norms and expectations. However, it is necessary to emphasize that the character and personality of each family member are very important. Informal family learning is very common and lasts almost all life because family influences on an individual never cease.

Adolescence as a period of transition from childhood to maturity is the most dynamic period in the life of an individual. The processes of separation and individuation are very important. For young people it is crucial that they have a good relationship with their parents and that they are treated with warmth and understanding, that they are accepted. If parents do not accept a child, if they reject him or are overly cold with him, this can have adverse consequences for the functioning of the adolescent. The same is true in cases of excessive emotional dependence. The behavior model that children adopt within their families and through the relationship with their parents will be significant for all other relationships they will form in their future lives. Knowledge about the influence of family relationships on children and youth was the stimulus that made us explore the correlation between family interactions and adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life. Attitudes have a great importance in the life of an individual. They are formed very early, are relatively stable and serve as an active perception, interpretation and evaluation of the outside world.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

It is hard to imagine how human society would function without the family. For many sociologists the family is the basic unit of social organization and it is to be understood as a universal social institution. The family depends on the society in many ways, the society being much bigger than the family. Everything that happens in the family and to its members may be more or less correlated with the phenomena and changes in the society, regardless of their nature – political, cultural, socio-political or economic. The knowledge of society would not be possible without the family. Throughout the history in different societies we always come across the family, regardless of the changes in its structure or function. The importance of the family for the society and the individual can be observed through the functions a family performs. Murdock (by Haralambos, 1994) argues that the family performs four essential functions in all societies: sexual, reproductive, economic and educational. These functions are equally important for individuals and the society as a whole. The family is seen as a multifunctional institution, indispensable to society. The same author also points out that the family does not perform all these functions by itself, but contributes significantly to all of them. Still, there is no other institution whose effectiveness is comparable to that of the family.

It should be noted that today we have a number of social institutions that specialize in performing some family functions (kindergartens, schools, hospitals, etc.). But this does not make the family any less important; its functions have been raised to a higher level. When examining changes in functions of the family, Ogburn (by Kregar et al., 2005) states that some family functions have disappeared to be gradually taken over by some other social institutions. The family is, for

*The family is seen as a multifunctional institution.*

instance, losing its economic function because the role of family businesses and family farms has changed under the influence of new technologies and new production systems. The family has no longer the monopoly in education. Education has become a common good, and lifelong learning has become an imperative. The family has also lost its central function in social care and in social functioning of its members in general. The new era defines the family through a number of roles in which the autonomy of individual family members and their particular life styles have completely transformed traditional family activities and family lifestyles. Security of the family, solidarity and care for its members and their community have lost their former meaning. The existence of many social institutions has replaced family care for the sick and helpless members, their livelihood and security in general. Ogburn (ibid.) says that while a number of functions were lost or were substantially altered in modern society, one function is gaining in value – this is the family's emotional function; its importance is greatly increasing in modern times since the functioning of a family depends on it.

An analysis of the relevant literature in Croatia reveals that many authors deal with the basic functions and tasks of the family. Vukasočić (1994, 1999) points out that the family combines a variety of functions related to creating and sustaining life, raising children, such as promotion of social and cultural life, generation and management of the necessary resources, maintaining of morale, fostering of religious beliefs and patriotism. He describes seven essential functions of the family, which are listed also by some other authors (Rosić, 1998; Stevanović, 2000): *the biological and reproductive function* (relating to childbirth and the creation of offspring); *the educational function* (family intimacy and emotional connection, love and closeness, mutual dependence and spontaneous acceptance of duties and responsibilities); *the economic function* (refer-

ring to satisfaction of all biological, physical and spiritual needs of the family and its members); *the socio-cultural function* (the family is the fundamental unit of the society in which the individual establishes his first social relations and communications); *the moral function* (relating to morality, which is a human attribute, reflected in the evaluation of human desires and actions as good or bad); *the religious function* (relating to religious education, a component of education in general); *the patriotic function* (applicable to developing a sense of national belonging, loyalty and devotion to one's people and country).

In realization of these functions the family has a great human and educational responsibility; parents' actions can motivate or discourage certain behaviors of a child. Family members often live together for many years and develop strong emotional relationships. The position and role of each individual in the family depends on their age and sex. Families have a longer and more meaningful history than others small groupings (Janković, 2004; Lacković-Grgin, 2006). The structure, type, value and functions of the family vary not only from country to country, but also within one country. In the society there are constant changes, which affect the meaning and role of the family. The family is the primary framework in which emotional, physical and social needs of each member are satisfied. It should also be noted that it is a dynamic, constantly changing structure. The individual passes through various developmental stages (childhood, adolescence, maturation, and aging) and assumes different roles at different times (child, adolescent, parent, guardian) The family structure itself is changing (arrival and departure of members) together with the changes in life situations of individuals (illness, death, crisis, unemployment, business success). Due to all this, it is difficult to talk about constancy of family influence on an individual development, but we tried to give some explanations.

## ADOLESCENCE AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Many authors find the term adolescence difficult to define because it contains contradictory characteristics and inconsistent patterns of behavior. When defining adolescence, authors generally take into account maturity processes, personal meanings of these processes and socio-cultural standards and expectations (Lacković-Grgin, 2006). Adolescence is characterized primarily by physical and sexual maturation, experienced universally by all people until the age of twenty. This is the period that affects psychological development and social relations of the individual, and requires adjustment of the adolescent and the people who surround him (Smetana et al., 2005). Adolescence can be defined as a period of transition from childhood to maturity, with universal morphological, physiological and cognitive changes. It is characterized by an accelerated process of change in social and psychological functioning and physical growth (McNamara, 2000). The period of adolescence is determined differently through history. Today, the age range of adolescence is 11 - 25 years, which reveals the increasingly important phenomenon of the so-called »extended adolescence«. Young people have a higher education and have to work harder to get employment and housing. This has resulted in the delay in the socio-economic independence of new families (Tomić-Koludrović & Leburić, 1998; 2001; Ilišin & Radin, 2002; Lacković-Grgin, 2006). The beginning of adolescence usually occurs through manifestation of sexual maturity. This development is marked by hormonal changes. The end of adolescence is socially determined and is in many societies earlier among women than men (Ambert, 1997). Despite a number of common characteristics there are large individual differences in the stages of growth in adolescence. According to some authors the extent of these differences and the way they manifest themselves are a result of »social ecology«, comprising family

environment, communication, social structure, geographical and political, cultural and historical context (McNamara, 2000).

The relationship between parents and their adolescent children is a frequently discussed topic.. Lacković-Grgin (2006:103) point out two key findings in the research on family relationships in adolescence: a) family relationships during adolescence change and have a significant impact on various areas of youth development (development of independence, self-esteem, individual pathology and problem behavior, etc.); b) family structure and changes occurring due to parents' divorce or death have an impact on the psychological and social functioning and identity development of adolescents.

One of the most popular theories attempting to explain the relationship between adolescents and parents is Bolby's attachment theory. According to this theory experience in early childhood is very important for the relationship the adolescents will have with their parents later on. Also, adolescence is a transitional period, in which adolescents tend to be less dependent of their primary object of affection (parents) because they recognize they are able to meet their current needs in relationships with peers better than with their parents. Bertherton (2005) notes that a child develops an internal working model with his primary caretakers (usually the mother) very early. This relationship is in the background of all close relationships in the child's life. Securely attached adolescents develop cognitive models that allow them to have adequate relationships with their parents, but also with peers. Insecurely attached adolescents follow a cognitive model in which other people appear threatening and hostile; these adolescents see themselves as unworthy of love and attention. However, during adolescence and often into early adulthood, young people still turn to their parents in times of increased stress and use them as objects of affection. It is important to emphasize that adolescents can explore the possibilities of independent living partly because

they know that their parents will be available when they need them. This is corroborated by the studies that indicate a high correlation between adolescents' search for autonomy and a secure attachment to parents (Lee & Bell, 2003; Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Allen et al. (1998) state that peer relationships begin to take over several functions during middle adolescence: peers are sources of intimacy, they provide feedback on social behavior and social impact, attachment and partnership and general information. Adolescents begin to use peers as objects of affection in this way. At this time there is a growing need for independence from their parents, which creates additional pressure. By the end of adolescence most young people create long-term relationships with romantic partners or close friends and these relationships have all the qualities of affection.

Parents often perceive adolescence as a difficult period, full of challenges. Raising an adolescent is very demanding because the parent-adolescent relationship is undergoing a significant transformation. Longitudinal study conducted by Jacobs (Jacobs et al., 2005)) show that parents who perceive adolescence in this way and see their adolescent child as peer-oriented are more concerned about adolescent social life than parents who do not follow such stereotypes. Their children report a negative relationship with their parents, they are more peer-oriented and exhibit deviant behavior more frequently.

The scientific literature (Lacković-Grgin, 2006) points out different types of adolescents' behavior in relation to four different parenting styles. Adolescents with authoritative parents show a higher school achievement, few behavioral problems, some psychological and somatic problems, and a higher social and cognitive competence. Adolescents who live with authoritarian parents show less negative behavior, less drug use, fewer somatic symptoms, but greater conformity and lack of confidence. In case of indifferent parents, adolescents have more internalized disorders, many behavioral problems and a lower psychosocial development. In school performance they do not differ from those from authoritarian families. The author points out that the consequences of the permissive style are less consistent. For permissive parents low control may be associated with their democratic attitudes and the confidence they have in their adolescent child. In this case the consequences are different than in the cases when poor control is associated with avoidance of parental responsibility and child neglect. However, it should be noted that is difficult to find pure forms of these relationships in practice; they usually appear in a mixed form, with different types of deviations. Parents choose their methods depending on what kind of relationship they have established with their children. If a strong emotional connection has been established, there will be more frequent and more democratic behavior forms.

The relationship between adolescents and parents often contains conflict and seems frustrating for both sides. Disagreements, arguments and fights about everyday problems are typical for the parent-adolescent relationship, especially in early adolescence (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Recent studies have confirmed that this conflict is normative and temporary in early adolescence and has the function of transforming the dynamics of family relationships. Minor conflicts with parents lead to a positive adolescent adjustment, which is not the case when the conflicts do not appear or are too frequent (Adams & Laursen, 2001). The conflicts do not affect the quality of later relationship between parents and adolescents. Closeness and support established earlier persist for a long time (Smetana et al., 2005). Laursen (Laursen et al., 1998, by Smetana et al., 2006) found that the development and disappearance of conflict during adolescence depend on several factors, the number of conflicts, their frequency and the circumstances in which they appear. Researchers who did research on the nature and causes of conflict between parents and children during adolescence agreed that conflict leads to greater autonomy in the parents-adolescent relation.



Adolescents have reached an age when they have the cognitive ability to understand that individuals differ in their beliefs and that their parents will not agree about everything. There is no family in which there is an absolute agreement between parents. It is an advantage for adolescents if their parents are emotional and show acceptance and if at the same time they have control and supervision.

### **FORMATION OF ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES AS PART OF INFORMAL LEARNING**

Attitudes are the most important and most studied problem in social psychology since they are very important for the social life of each individual. Bohner (2003) highlights three levels of attitudes: *the individual level* – in which attitudes affect perception, opinion and behavior; *the interpersonal level* – information about the attitudes are routinely sought and discovered and in this way the world becomes more predictable; *the intergroup level* – attitudes towards their own group and other groups are the focus of intergroup cooperation and conflict. Parents have a particularly important influence on the child during adolescence, especially on the formation of his attitudes to gender roles, marriage, parenting, children, career, and etc. Before adolescents are ready to assume the role of the adult and fulfill the expectations this role carries, the parents guide and prepare them. Studies have shown that parents who have traditional attitudes to gender roles and marriage will transmit these attitudes to their children, whereas adolescents whose parents have more flexible attitudes to gender roles will show less traditional attitudes and behavior (Ivey & Yaktus, 1996). Adolescent usually build their attitudes in two ways: by watching their parents in their roles and by talking and discussing it with parents. In the relationship with their children parents give children important information about gender roles and on how to participate in them. In this

way they help the child to form expectations that are required for the formation of adult roles.

In examining adolescents' attitudes the researchers have mainly employed the ecocontextual model. It is used to identify several levels of impact on the individual, which were defined by Brofenbrenner (Vulić-Prtorić, 2001) as *the microsystem*, involving involves the attitudes a child develops in face-to-face situations (communication, parent-child attachment, parental upbringing style), *the exosystem*, which does not involve the child directly but affects him indirectly (school, neighborhood, parent's workplace, social support system) and *the macrosystem* (tradition and culture).

Starrels & Holm (2000) cite studies dealing with the micro-system, which showed that the level of parental education is connected with adolescents' attitude towards family life and future plans in that adolescents of highly educated parents expect to be married and have children later (Hogan, 1985; Trent, 1994); closeness with father does not show a correlation with adolescents' attitudes towards marriage and family life (Starreles, 1994); siblings' influence has also proved to be significant for adolescents, as they receive some advice on personal problems and their future family life plans from them (East, 1996, Tucker et al., 1997, by Starrels & Holm, 2000).

If we look at the exosystem, we can see that several studies indicate that the parents' employment status affects the adolescents' attitudes towards family life. Dennehy and Mortimer (1993, by Starrels & Holm, 2000) found that adolescents whose mothers were employed want to have children more often than other participants in the study. Trent (1994, by Starrels & Holm, 2000) found that adolescents whose mothers were employed plan to marry and implement family life earlier. Barnett et al. (2003) found that adolescents, whose mothers were employed in their growing up years, expressed less concern about the future conflict between the parent's role and the career;

*The model of parental behavior is an example of informal learning.*

they plan marriage and parenthood at a later age than the adolescents whose mothers were not employed or have worked very briefly.

Regarding the macrosystem and the differences relating to race and culture, one research study

showed that there are differences in the attitudes of white adolescents who plan marriage and family earlier than African-American adolescents (Moore & Stief, 1991). The authors explain these racial differences with the thesis that the opportunities for married life are different for adolescents

of different races in the U.S. Research of Lichter (Lichter et al., 1991) showed that adolescents' plans for the future are related to the economic possibilities of a particular race and the possibility to find a spouse within their race. Another study showed that American adolescents of Asian and Latin origin have stronger values and greater expectations concerning help, respect and support of their families than adolescents of European origin (Fuligni et al., 1999). These differences tend to increase and are consistent with regard to gender, family structure and socio-economic status. The study has also shown that the adolescents' attitudes towards family responsibilities correlate with positive relationships with parents and other family members, peers as well as academic motivation.

A survey of the literature indicates that parents are one of the most important sources of information for adolescents concerning marital, parental and work roles, and, thus, affect the formation of attitudes to these. In everyday family life, a child acquires the basic competencies, such as the communication skills, acquaintance with common life, critical thinking, the ability to change and adapt to change, creativity, tolerance, recognition, respect for others and fostering of self-confidence and self-criticism (Rogić, 2011). It is possible that the models the parents present to their children while performing their role, the identification with them, the

demonstration of the ability to change roles with regard to a new context, are much more important than mere talking. The way in which adolescents perceive and react to their parents in these roles is the most important factor which later affects their expectations of themselves. The model of parental behavior, which the children take in while they are growing up, is an example of informal learning. It is the essential element in the complex process of learning that occurs in a family from the day the child is born.

## METHODOLOGY

***The aim of the research.*** The aim of this study was to examine whether the dimensions of parental behavior and satisfaction with their own families as perceived by adolescents, can be associated with the adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life. The dimensions of parental behavior are defined as acceptance by mother and father and rejection by mother and father. These dimensions and assessment of satisfaction with one's family are related to the quality of family interaction and represent in this study the independent research variables, while adolescents' attitudes towards family represent dependent variables.

***Hypothesis.*** The family environment is the most important context in which a child's development takes place. Parental support, love and warmth have a positive impact on a child's emotional and social stability and maturity. On the other hand, indifference, rudeness, excessive control and child neglect lead to various problems and difficulties with children and later to their difficulties in adulthood. The question is: Does this have an impact on the forms of interpersonal functioning in the family and formation of attitudes in adolescence? Our hypothesis is as follows: *There is a statistically significant correlation between the assessed dimensions of family interaction and satisfaction with family life on the one hand and adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life.*

**The Sample.** This study used a sample of 862 students, of whom 385 were male (45%) and 477 female (55%). The sample involved students from different high schools (3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 52%; 4<sup>th</sup> grade – 48%) in two counties in Croatia (Zadar and Koprivnica-Križevci).

**Instruments.** The instruments used in the study are the scale of the courts and the questionnaire. For the purposes of this study we designed the *Questionnaire of adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life*. It contains 61 variables formed as statements. Respondents select one of the five possible responses on the Likert-type scale, which express their degree of agreement with the statement presented (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The statements are related to seven aspects of family life: attitudes towards marriage, attitudes towards family life, attitudes towards the role of women and men in marriage, attitudes towards parenting, attitudes towards the role of mother and father, attitudes regarding relationships among family members and attitudes towards work.

Apart from the questionnaire, we used *The Quality of Family Interaction Scale* (KOBİ),

which examines separately the interaction with mother and father, and an additional scale, designed by Vulić-Prtorić (2000), which examines the child's feelings in relation to the family as a whole. This scale measures the parent/child interaction in two dimensions, often described as acceptance (emotional warmth, intimacy) and rejection (control, emotional neglect). These two dimensions are determined in accordance with the theory of parental acceptance and rejection (PART - Parental acceptance-rejection theory) by Rohner (1999). The KOBİ scale is a scale which tests the child's feelings in relation to the family as a whole; it was modeled on the *Scale of satisfaction with family* (Lacković-Grgin & Opačić, 1989) and the *Index of family relationships* (Hudson, 1977, by Lacković-Grgin & Opačić, 1989).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table below shows the results of the correlation between the established dimension of family interactions and the adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life.

**Table 1: Correlation between the dimension of family interactions and adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life (N = 833)**

VARIABLES	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Satisfaction with family	1,00											
2. Acceptance – mother	0,63**	1,00										
3. Rejection – mother	-0,61**	-0,69**	1,00									
4. Acceptance – father	0,61**	0,40**	-0,34**	1,00								
5. Rejection – father	-0,62**	-0,40**	0,57**	-0,62**	1,00							
6. Attitudes towards marriage	-0,25**	-0,13**	0,15*	-0,20**	0,12**	1,00						
7. Attitudes towards family life	0,14**	0,19**	-0,11**	0,09*	-0,15**	-0,07*	1,00					
8. Attitudes towards the women's and men's role in marriage	0,07*	0,02	0,04	0,07*	0,06	-0,33**	-0,21**	1,00				
9. Attitudes towards parenting	0,15**	0,09**	-0,07*	0,11**	0,00	-0,42**	0,06	0,52**	1,00			
10. Attitudes towards the role of mother and father	0,15**	0,15**	-0,14**	0,17**	-0,20**	-0,05	0,39**	-0,28**	-0,06	1,00		
11. Attitudes about relationships among family members	-0,16**	-0,17**	0,22**	-0,10**	0,19**	0,05	-0,16**	0,28**	0,14**	-0,25**	1,00	
12. Attitudes towards work	0,03	0,03	0,04	-0,03	-0,01	-0,03	0,19**	0,14**	0,18**	0,12**	0,02	1,00

\*p< .05 ; \*\*p< .01



The data in the table indicate that the adolescents who experience greater acceptance by mother are more satisfied with their family ( $r = 0.63, p < .01$ ). Contrary to this, findings show that those adolescents who experienced greater rejection by mother are less satisfied with their family ( $r = -0.61, p < .01$ ). Similarly, it shows the correlations between the scale of satisfaction with family and the degree of acceptance or rejection by father. This was expected.

A negative correlation was found between the results on the scale of satisfaction with family and the scale of adolescents' attitudes towards marriage ( $r = -0.25, p < .01$ ) and the scale of attitudes regarding relationships among family members ( $r = -0.16, p < .01$ ). It is possible to conclude that the adolescents who have a more liberal attitude to marriage and those who are more tolerant of conflict, are less satisfied with their own families. The more liberal attitudes on the scale of attitudes towards marriage are related to the attitude that marriage is not necessary for a good relationship and that children are not required for a successful marriage. It is possible that these adolescents have parents who have more conservative attitudes than are their own and that this leads to the dissatisfaction with their family. Regarding the attitudes about the relationships among family members, the data showed that the adolescents who are more tolerant to conflicts among family members, show less satisfaction with their family. Assuming that the volume of conflicts reflects the level of satisfaction with the family, we can conclude that adolescents who believe that conflicts are »normal«, are probably subjected to conflict in their families, which makes them dissatisfied. As is well-known that children learn from the model, it is possible that the children who come from a family where conflicts dominated believe this is a common way of family functioning. These children very often do not learn a different way of communicating and transfer this type of communication to the relationships outside

their family. However, such communication leads to tensions and bad mood and, thus, to dissatisfaction with one's family.

Furthermore, it appears that adolescents who have positive attitudes towards happy family life are more satisfied with their own family ( $r = 0.14, p < .01$ ). This finding was expected because in this case satisfaction certainly comes from a positive experience these children bring from their own families. The correlation with the scores on the scale of attitudes towards the role of man and woman in marriage ( $r = 0.07, p < .05$ ) indicates that those who have more traditional attitudes towards the roles of men and women in the family, show greater satisfaction with their own families. The traditional attitudes on the scale of attitudes towards the role of man and woman in marriage are based on the belief that man is the head of family and that a woman's place is in the home. Since the Croatian family is still largely conservative and has many traditional features, changes in the roles of men and women in marriage are occurring slower than in the West, so this finding is not surprising. If the traditional view is accepted as such, it probably does not have an effect on the decrease in satisfaction with one's family. There is a correlation with the scores on the scale of attitudes towards parenting ( $r = 0.15, p < .01$ ), so more positive attitudes towards parenting indicate greater satisfaction with one's family. Adolescents believe that parenting is an important role for both men and women and that satisfaction with one's family depends of realization of this role. And finally, the correlation with the scores on the scale of attitudes towards the role of mother and father ( $r = 0.15, p < .01$ ) means that adolescents who have less traditional attitudes towards these roles and a responsible attitude towards parenthood, are more satisfied with their own families. Less traditional attitudes towards the role of mother and father on this scale were related to the belief in equality of mother and father and great significance of these roles for the development

of the child. The data confirm that changes are occurring in the Croatian family and that, traditional beliefs notwithstanding, the attitudes of young people are changing and show an advance that affects their satisfaction with their family.

Within the same sample we found that adolescents who have positive attitudes towards happy family life have experience greater acceptance by mother ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, adolescents who have more positive attitudes towards parenting have experienced greater acceptance by mother ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) too. The correlation with the scores on the scale of attitudes towards the role of mother and father ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) indicates that adolescents who have less traditional attitudes to these roles and a responsible attitude towards parenthood, have the experience of greater acceptance by mother. It can be concluded that, as was expected, the acceptance by mother has a significant influence on the formation of adolescents' positive attitudes towards family life. A negative correlation was found between the results on the scale of acceptance by mother and the scale of adolescents' attitudes towards marriage ( $r = -0.13$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the scale of attitudes concerning relationships among family members ( $r = -0.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The adolescents who have more liberal attitudes to marriage and those who are more tolerant to conflict, have experienced less accepting by mother. It can be concluded that the adolescents who do not have a good and warm relationship with their mothers have more liberal attitudes about marriage, or else believe that children are not required for a successful marriage and that formal legalization of marriage is not necessary. Similarly, these adolescents show more tolerant attitudes towards resolution of conflicts among family members if they feel less accepted by mother. And this is possibly a consequence of a mother-relation in which there is little acceptance and a great deal of conflict.

Further results show that the adolescents who have more liberal attitudes towards marriage ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and those who are more tolerant of conflict ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) felt more rejected by their mother. This is consistent with the previous results obtained on the scale of acceptance by mother, which showed a negative correlation. Adolescents who have positive attitudes towards happy family life experienced less rejection by mother ( $r = -0.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than adolescents who have more positive attitudes towards parenting ( $r = -0.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Finally, a negative correlation established on the scale of attitudes towards the role of mother and father ( $r = -0.14$ ,  $p < .01$ ), means that adolescents who have less traditional attitudes with regard to those roles and a responsible attitude towards parenthood have experienced less mother-rejection. As you can see, the dimension of rejection by mother is a factor that influences the adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life. If the rejection is less present in mother-adolescent relationship, the attitudes towards and expectations regarding family life in general are more positive. .

The table shows that adolescents who have positive attitudes towards happy family life experienced greater acceptance by father ( $r = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Similarly, adolescents who have more traditional attitudes towards the roles of men and women in the family experienced greater acceptance by father ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This is also true of the adolescents who have more positive attitudes towards parenting ( $r = 0.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the adolescents who have less traditional attitudes towards the role of mother and father in the family and a responsible attitude towards parenthood ( $r = 0.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results show that the dimension of acceptance by father has a positive effect on adolescents' attitudes towards the family and the roles they will perform in the future. Those adolescents

*Adolescents believe that parenting is an important role for both men and women.*

who have more liberal attitudes towards marriage ( $r = -0.20, p < .01$ ) and those who are more tolerant of conflict ( $r = -0.10, p < .01$ ) experienced less acceptance by father. The highlighted results are almost the same as the results on the dimensions of acceptance by mother.

It also became evident that adolescents who have more liberal attitudes to marriage ( $r = 0.12, p < .01$ ) and those who are more tolerant towards conflict ( $r = 0.19, p < .01$ ) have experienced higher rejection by father, which is consistent with the results about the dimension of acceptance by father. It can be seen that adolescents who have more positive attitudes towards family life ( $r = -0.15, p < .01$ ) as well as those who have less traditional attitudes towards the role of mother and father in the family and a responsible attitude to parenting ( $r = -0.20, p < .01$ ) have experienced less rejection by father. It can be seen that adolescents who have more positive attitudes towards family life ( $r = -0.15, p < .01$ ) as well as those who have less traditional attitudes towards the role of mother and father in the family and a responsible attitude to parenting ( $r = -0.20, p < .01$ ) have experienced less rejection by father. Finally, we must emphasize that statistically significant correlations did not appear in the relation to the other variables tested.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said: that the degree of acceptance and rejection by parents and satisfaction with one's own family influence adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life. The importance of the dimension of acceptance/rejection has proved to be nearly equal in case of both father and mother. Fathers' and mothers' behavior in the family is very important for the development and formation of adolescents' attitudes. If the family functions well, if the adolescent feels accepted rather than rejected, if he feels good in the family, he will probably have positive

attitudes towards family life. These results are consistent with the findings of several previous studies. Ivey and Yaktus (1996) established the importance of the role of parents in shaping children's attitudes. They found that parents who have traditional attitudes to gender roles and marriage transmit these attitudes to their children. The parents with more flexible attitudes to gender roles have children who exhibit less traditional attitudes and behavior. Other studies have confirmed the influence of parents, their behavior and their attitudes, on the formation of attitudes and behavior of youth (Starreles, 1994; Starrels & Holm, 2000).

The results obtained in this study show that the hypothesis stating: *There is a statistically significant correlation between the assessed dimensions of family interaction and satisfaction with family life on the one hand and adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life.*

– can be partially accepted. The correlations between the assessed dimensions of family interaction and adolescents' attitudes towards some aspects of family life have been proved with regard to almost all the examined aspects of family life, except the attitude to work.

The findings of this research could be used to develop programs for work with parents and adolescents, such as different types of programs for prevention, education and counseling. The implementation of such programs is especially important for parents, can educate themselves to gain a better understanding of their adolescent children and of the changes occurring during adolescence. Preventive and therapeutic work with young people from families with cold and strict parents has to focus on raising awareness of family influence on the child and, later, on his newly created family.

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